

# Understanding Biblical Typology

Biblical Typology is often misunderstood and equally misused.



THEOPEDIA.com "Typology is a method of biblical interpretation whereby an element found in the Old Testament is seen to prefigure one found in the New Testament. The initial one is called the type and the fulfillment is designated the antitype. Either type or antitype may be a person, thing, or event, but often the type is messianic and frequently related to the idea of salvation. The use of Biblical typology enjoyed greater popularity in previous centuries, although even now it is by no means ignored as a hermeneutic."

THEOPEDIA.com "Typological interpretation is specifically the interpretation of the Old Testament based on the fundamental theological unity of the two Testaments whereby something in the Old shadows, prefigures, adumbrates something in the New. Hence, what is interpreted in the Old is not foreign or peculiar or hidden, but arises naturally out of the text due to the relationship of the two Testaments."

Romans 15:4—For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.

2 Timothy 3:16 All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: 17 That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

Mt 5:18 For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.

## 1. Biblical Typology is Often Misunderstood

"We may explain a little about how an engine works, but the engineer, to whom every nut and bolt are familiar could point out exactly every detail."

## 2. Biblical Typology can be Abused

- Because it has been so sorely abused, modern scholarship has succeeded in almost eliminating the investigation and teaching of typology as a valid interpretive method.
- The adopted rules of HERMENEUTICS still apply! Consistency in interpretation of Scripture is a foundation principle hermeneutics.
- Not everything is a type. Much in Scripture is for ILLUSTRATION and not every detail to be dissected as having a spiritual significance.
- Do not go backwards into Judaism, but forward into the New Covenant.

## 3. Biblical Typology is Often but not Always Exactly Stated

### A. Exactly Stated

- compare Genesis 5:1 and Romans 5:14

Romans 5:14 — Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come. [type or pattern]

- compare Leviticus 4:32 & John 1:29

Leviticus 4:32 — And if he bring a lamb for a sin offering, he shall bring it a female without blemish.

John 1:29 — The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.

- read Galations 4:21-31

### B. Implicitly Connected

- The New Testament never uses Joseph as type of Christ. Can any Bible reader ignore the similarities of Joseph and Jesus?

Both are first-born. Both are shepherds. Both are the most loved of their fathers. Both were prophecied to be rulers. Both Joseph's and Jesus' brothers were jealous of them, and did not believe them. Joseph was sent by his father to his brothers. Jesus was sent by His Father to Israel. Joseph was apparently put to death, and Jesus truly, by their own people to get them out of the way. Reuben wanted to rescue Joseph. Pilate wanted to rescue Jesus. Joseph was sold as a slave to Egypt. Jesus was betrayed for the price of a slave. Both went to Egypt. Both were sold as slaves. Both were falsely accused. While only Jesus was truly sinless, Joseph is one of the few people significantly written about in the Bible of which no sins are mentioned.

## 4. Some Guides for Interpretation of Biblical Types

1. Look for the basic meaning of the symbol. Go beyond the superficial.
2. The physical is often used to picture the spiritual.
3. Look for the consistent use of a specific symbol in the Old Testament.
4. The symbol or type must be an illustration of and consistent with New Testament truth.
5. Recognize that the Old Testament teaches the same truth as the New Testament.
6. Don't expect the type to cover every subject of theology--limit to the topic under consideration in the context.

7. Assume that details given have meaning--seek to discover that meaning. However, don't expect every detail to fit. Every analogy, by its very nature, falls short of the full reality.
  8. Identify interpretative constants by determining an accurate definition of any type or symbol which fits all the uses of that term in Scripture, e.g. "Lion" symbolizes power, whether applied to Satan as "a roaring lion" or to Christ as the "lion of the tribe of Judah."
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Revision #3

Created 6 September 2022 18:13:22 by Stephen Reynolds Jr

Updated 6 September 2022 18:35:41 by Stephen Reynolds Jr